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AUTHOR Blanchard, Paul D.
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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes decisional practices of Kentucky school boards, concentrating on the behavior of the boards as units rather than on the behavior of individual board members. The analysis is based on data from questionnaires completed by members of 57 Kentucky school boards, data describing school district social and economic characteristics, and school boards election data. The study reveals that internal group variables (for instance, opposition to the superintendent and disagreement over the proper role of the Federal Government) are the most compelling explanations of school board conflict. However, external variables (especially the social status of district residents) have a good deal of import, indicating that school board decisions are not based on internal factors alone. In several ways, board members behave like political decisionmakers in other areas, particularly legislators at the State and local levels. (Author/JG)

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School Board Conflict, Cohesion and Professional Negotiations

Chales F. Faber, Guest Editor

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With articles by Roland Haun and
✓ Paul D. Blanchard, and
Commentaries by Maurice D. Bement and
J. Marvin Dodson

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CONFLICT AND COHESION IN KENTUCKY SCHOOL BOARDS*

BY PAUL D. BLANCHARD

INTRODUCTION

This study focuses upon the local school board as a collegial† decision-making body. School boards have received relatively little attention by political scientists, and this is unfortunate since they are often engaged in genuine political activity and make decisions which are recognized to have great political consequence. The key decisional variable examined in this study is conflict and the structure of conflict on school boards. The presence or absence of conflict has been central to most studies of collegial decisional behavior. Since research by political scientists about school board decision-making is almost non-existent, a logical starting point for an exploratory study in this area is a careful examination of the presence and structure of conflict on school boards. Thus, this study concentrates on conflict and variables related to it on Kentucky school boards, leaving other aspects of school board decision-making for others to research.

In this study, data collected about a large number of school boards in Kentucky are used to analyze decisional practices. The boards themselves, and not individual members of the boards, are the units of analysis. From this research, which includes data from questionnaires administered to Kentucky school board members, school board election data, and data involving school district social and economic characteristics, we attempt to determine what independent variables produce variation in the dependent variable, conflict. Specifically, we are interested in discovering whether external variables or internal variables are more powerful in explaining the variation. By external variables, we refer to characteristics of the school district (constituency); these include social complexity, social status, and electoral competition. By internal variables, we mean characteristics of the group (school board) itself, particularly its relationship to the superintendent and the degree to which board members share a similarity of attitudes.

The decision to confine the study to Kentucky school boards was made for obvious reasons related to the most efficient allocation of time and resources. It might be pointed out, however, that observers have commented on the particularly political content of educational decisions made in Kentucky school districts. In any case, this decision does not significantly limit

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the scope of the proposed research, since a representative sample of Kentucky school districts allows the kind of urban-rural, rich-poor, large-small, and homogeneous-heterogeneous comparisons not possible using only suburban or metropolitan school districts, as political scientists have done almost exclusively in the past.

The study, then, is designed to promote the further understanding of collegial decision-making and should thereby prove to be theoretically fruitful. It might also be significant from the standpoint of contemporary politics. School boards are being asked to make increasingly difficult decisions involving some of the most controversial issues of our time. Any research which sheds light on how these decisions are made could contribute to the understanding of some of this controversy.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A political scientist searching the literature for research relevant to a study of school board decision-making is confronted with several alternatives. He can examine the literature of educational administration and find a great many aspects of school board decisional practices discussed from the orientation of the educator. He can examine the social psychological literature on small groups for propositions on group behavior in general. Finally, he can search the literature of political science, particularly the subdisciplines of legislative and judicial behavior, for relevant theory on group behavior in the political and institutional setting. Each of these alternatives has been explored by the writer. In the section that follows we briefly review literature both on school board decision-making and group behavior in general.

The literature of educational administration is perhaps least fruitful since it suggests so little in the way of relevant theory. However, many of the themes of the educational literature are interesting and deserve the close attention of political scientists. The dominant theme in this literature seems to be that education should be insulated from politics. Professional school leaders have tended to be obsessed with the idea that schools should be completely separated from politics and have succeeded in removing local education from municipal control and instituting the nonpartisan election of school boards. Besides the theme of insulation from politics, other recurring themes in this literature involve the social composition of boards of education, the distinction between policy-making and administration, and the board member's orientation to the community. Studies by a number of educators, beginning with Counts[1] in 1927, have shown that school board members are overwhelmingly from the upper or upper-middle social classes and that the occupational groups of businessmen and professionals are disproportionately overrepresented.[2] The literature on the policy making/admin-

[1] George S. Counts, *The Social Composition of Boards of Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), cited from Ralph B. Kimbrough, *Political Power and Educational Decision-Making* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964), pp. 18-19.

[2] W. W. Charters, Jr., "Social Class Analysis and the Control of Public Education," *Harvard Educational Review*, 23 (fall, 1953), pp. 268-70, located sixty-two separate studies on social composition, none of which departed significantly from the original finding reported by Counts.

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istration distinction is very prevalent and usually consists of warnings concerning the negative consequences should board members exercise administrative action.[3] Significantly, policy-making is usually defined quite narrowly. Political scientists and students of public administration have for years been aware of the difficulty and arbitrariness of finding clear boundaries to separate these two spheres of decision-making.[4]

Most meaningful for this research are several studies which seek reasons for school board conflict. Some of the reasons which have been suggested include the following: the existence of standing committees, lack of satisfaction by board members with the superintendent, a "self-oriented" motivation for running for office by board members (rather than a "community-oriented" motivation), and extensive turnover in board membership.[5] While these reasons seem somewhat tangential to political decision-making when viewed from the perspective of the political scientist, they do suggest some possible directions which should be and are explored. For example, we consider motivation for running in our recruitment discussion; turnover is involved in our discussion of the "insulation" of board members from the community; and, of course, the subject of board member relationships to the superintendent constitutes an important dimension of the category of variables we have labelled as internal.

Anyone studying group conflict or cohesion will inevitably be directed toward the literature of social psychology since these concepts have received the most attention in the discipline. In fact, cohesion is the key concept in field theory or group dynamics, a field of social psychology where pioneering work has been done by Kurt Lewin and his followers. Using experimental procedures, students of group dynamics have discovered that the following variables tend to contribute to group cohesion: Agreement on norms and goals, democratic leadership, and similarity in background. They also have found that cohesion, in turn, seems to contribute positively to the following variables: *productivity*, *satisfaction*, *conformity*, and *cooperation*.[6] There are at least two problems with relating the theory of group dynamics to the

[3]One example of literally dozens of sources which could be cited is Archie R. Dykes, *School Board and Superintendent: The Effective Working Relationships* (Danville, Ill.: Interstate Printers and Publishers, 1965), pp. 106-17.

[4]See Thomas H. Eliot, "Toward an Understanding of Public School Politics" *American Political Science Review*, 53 (December, 1959), pp. 1036-37, and Paul H. Appleby, *Policy and Administration* (University, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1949), p. 16.

[5]See particularly Leonard E. Burkett, "An Analysis of the Conditions and Practices of Kentucky Boards of Education in Relation to Certain School District Factors" (Unpublished Ed.D. Dissertation, University of Kentucky 1967), pp. 19-21; Neal Gross, "Easing Strains and Tensions Between Superintendents and Board Members," *Nation's Schools*, 56 (October, 1955), p. 27.

[6]Clovis R. Shepherd, *Small Groups* (San Francisco: Chandler, 1964), pp. 23-27; Dorwin Cartwright, "The Nature of Group Cohesiveness," *Group Dynamics*, (ed.) Dorwin Cartwright and Alvin Zander (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 107. This type of research is most clearly applied to school boards by Neal Gross, Ward S. Mason, and Alexander W. McEachern, *Explorations in Role Analysis* (New York: John Wiley, 1958).

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present study. First, while it suggests many possible relationships *internal* to the group, no variables *external* to the groups are suggested. We would be remiss not to explore these kinds of relationships in a study of an elective body like a school board which certainly must take some cues for its behavior from outside the group itself.[7] The second problem is discussed by James Barber, who argued that hypotheses generated in the typical small group laboratory study are unlikely to be confirmed by observers of the typical governmental decision-making group, because there are so many differences between the subjects used in the experimental situation and government officials and also substantial differences in the activities of the two types of groups. He found that this was indeed true in his study of boards of finance in Connecticut. Barber suggested that rather than lifting *findings* from small group research, political scientists might consider imitating the *methods* of small group research. Barber's study was designed so that his *subjects* were individuals who were already operating as decision-makers in small governmental groups, and he had them perform *tasks* which were similar to those with which they were familiar or had performed.[8] In this study, we attempt to follow this suggestion to the extent that our subjects are "real" decision-makers and they are asked to describe actual decision-making behavior. In addition, we make use of one technique devised by the small-group researchers, the sociometric questionnaire item.

Literature on school boards may be found in other social scientific disciplines, particularly sociology. The pre-eminent study is the one reported by Gross and others, which compared the role expectations that school board members and superintendents held for the positions occupied by each.[9]

Many of the findings of the Gross study are pertinent to this research. For example, the authors found that both experience and frequency of interaction were directly related to consensus among school board members but neither interaction nor experience produced consensus between board members and superintendents. The authors found the same results for political and economic homogeneity and consensus. Homogeneity contributed to board member (intra-position) consensus but not to superintendent-board member (inter-position) agreement.[10]

Other sociological literature has focused on the relationship of educational decision-making at the local level to the problem of race and desegregation. Of particular interest were studies by Crain[11] and Rogers[12] involving school politics in large cities. In Crain's study of the desegregation controversy in eight cities, he found that school boards played a major role in

[7] See S. Sidney Ulmer, *Courts as Small and Not So Small Groups* (New York: General Learning Press, 1971), p. 8, concerning the relative impact of internal and external factors in collegial decision-making in the judiciary.

[8] James D. Barber, *Power in Committees* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966), pp. 8-13.

[9] Gross, Mason, and McEachern, p. 97.

[10] ibid., pp. 178-191.

[11] Robert L. Crain, *The Politics of School Desegregation* (Chicago: Aldine, 1967).

[12] David Rogers, *110 Livingston Street: Politics and Bureaucracy in the New York City School System* (New York: Random House, 1968).

bringing about desegregation in comparison with superintendents. The most important factor determining whether boards allowed desegregation was intra-board cohesion. Cohesive boards were able to bring about desegregation more smoothly by preventing the issue from becoming a public controversy. The school superintendent, on the other hand, was seen as a barrier to the civil rights movement because of his professional norms.[13] In Rogers' study of New York City, the school board was described as weak and dominated by the school bureaucracy, and its responses to controversial issues like segregation was characterized as cautious and ineffective, including deliberate delay, vacillation, and minimal action. One consequence for New York City, wrote Rogers, was the polarization of civil rights groups.[14]

Sociologists have also commented on the school board's impact on the entire question of school reorganization, which is shown to be an extremely political issue.[15] One other example of a sociologist's perspective is a study which argues that while school boards are elected to represent the community to the school administration, circumstances cause them to legitimize the goals of the school administration to the public.[16] This point of view will be considered when we present our findings on the school boards' relationship to the community.

A few political scientists have reported research on school decision-making. These studies have usually focused on large city school systems and have clearly demonstrated that school boards are often involved in political disputes and conflicts. Political scientists who have given particular attention to school politics include Gittell[17], who has studied New York and other big city school systems, Rosenthal[18], who has specialized in the politics of teachers' organizations, and Pois[19] whose study of the Chicago school board was written from his perspective as participant-observer. Studies of school politics in suburbia would include those of David Minar[20], Louis Masotti[21], and Roscoe Martin.[22] Political scientists have tended to emphasize such

[13] Crain, Chapters 10 and 11.

[14] Rogers, Chapters 7 and 12, especially p. 395.

[15] Basil G. Zimmer and Amos H. Hawley, *Metropolitan Area Schools: Resistance to District Reorganization* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1968), pp. 164-66.

[16] Norman D. Kerr (pseudonym), "The School Board as an Agency of Legitimation," *Sociology of Education*, 38 (Fall, 1964), pp. 34-59.

[17] Marilyn Gittell, *Participants and Participation: A Study of School Policy in New York City* (New York: Center for Urban Education, 1966).

[18] Alan Rosenthal, *Pedagogues and Power: Teacher Groups in School Politics* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1969).

[19] Joseph Pois, *The School Board Crisis: A Chicago Case Study* (Chicago: Educational Methods, 1964).

[20] *Educational Decision-Making in Suburban Communities* (David W. Minar, Washington, D. C.: U.S. Office of Education, Cooperative Research Project #2440, 1966).

[21] Louis H. Masotti, *Education and Politics in Suburbia: The New Trier Experience* (Cleveland: The Press of Western Reserve University, 1967), p. 7.

[22] Roscoe C. Martin, *Government and the Suburban School* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966).

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aspects of school politics as low public participation in school elections,[23] the role of interest groups in school politics,[24] the inability of the system to respond to political crisis,[25] insulation and isolation of school politics from other political processes,[26] and educational decision-makers' fears of conflict.[27] Each of these themes has been considered in the formulating of specific hypotheses.

Perhaps more relevant to the present study have been attempts by political scientists to apply and use small group theory and methods. Studies of this kind are probably most prevalent in the literature of the judiciary. Much of this research is built upon the pioneering work on the Supreme Court, reported by such scholars as Murphy, Danelske, and Ulmer, which emphasized the importance of group concepts like leadership, interaction, and equilibrium.[28] These studies demonstrated how group norms could restrain individual members' deviant (dissenting) behavior and that the sharing of attitudes aids cohesion. In more recent works, Canon and Jaros have shown how group conflict in state supreme courts may result from external factors if certain structural variables are operative,[29] while Thomas G. Walker has demonstrated the impact of the group situation on U. S. district judges.[30]

The literature of legislative behavior is also somewhat relevant, since school boards are usually considered legislative bodies. Much of this research has focused on the presence or absence of group conflict. Legislative scholars examining the cohesion of legislative parties have found that the socio-economic makeup of the district is perhaps the most important factor in explaining this cohesiveness.[31] Other important aspects would include legisla-

[23] Vincent A. Ostrom, "School Board Politics: An Analysis of Non-Partisanship in the Los Angeles City Board of Education" (Unpublished Master's Thesis, U.C.L.A., 1945), p. 189.

[24] M. Kent Jennings and Harmon Zeigler, "Interest Representation in School Governance," a paper presented at the 1970 APSA meetings, Los Angeles, California.

[25] See Marily Gittell and T. Edward Hollander, *Six Urban School Districts: A Comparative Study of Institutional Response* (New York: Praeger, 1968), p. 197.

[26] Wallace S. Sayre, "The Politics of Education," *Teacher's College Record* 65 November, 1963), p. 183.

[27] Nicholas A. Masters, et al., *State Politics and the Public Schools: An Exploratory Analysis* (New York: Knopf, 1964), pp. 272 ff.

[28] See, for example, Walter F. Murphy, *Elements of Judicial Strategy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 47-54; David Danelski, "The Influence of the Chief Justice in the Decisional Process," *Courts, Judges, and Politics* (ed.) Walter Murphy and C. Herman Pritchett (New York: Random House, 1961), pp. 167-88; S. Sidney Ulmer, "Homeostatic Tendencies in the U.S. Supreme Court," *Introductory Readings in Political Behavior* (ed.) S. Sidney Ulmer (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1961), pp. 167-88.

[29] Bradley C. Canon and Dean Jaros, "External Variables, Institutional Structure, and Dissent on State Supreme Courts," *Polity*, 3 (Winter, 1970).

[30] Thomas G.Walker, "Judges in Concert: The Influence of the Group on Judical Decision-Making" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Kentucky, 1970).

[31] See especially Hugh L. Le Blanc "Voting in State Senates: Party and Constituency Influences," *Midwest Journal of Political Sciences*, 13 (February 1969), pp. 33-57.

tors' inherent identification with the party, the strength of the leadership, and the issues involved.[32] Studies of cohesion in Congressional committees have suggested that committee cohesion is strengthened when members agree on the committee's purpose, membership is stable, and there is little external pressure on members.[33]

More recent legislative research has focused on smaller legislative bodies. Most notable is the Eulau research on city councils in the San Francisco Bay area. Eulau measured group conflict and found that it was associated with other group behavioral features such as oppositional activity, co-sponsorship, respect, and affect.[34] Barber's study of boards of finance found no relationship between member interactive participation and group cohesion.[35] Finally, in David Minar's study of a small number of suburban school boards, it was discovered that school district characteristics were powerful variables in explaining group cohesion.[36]

RESEARCH DESIGN

Due to the variety of literature discussed above, one is forced to take a rather eclectic theoretical position. These studies seem to indicate that the extent of conflict in a collegial decision-making group is a consequence of factors both external and internal to the group. They indicate less clearly the specific internal and external variables which are most powerful and whether internal or external variables should be considered more significant. Therefore, in formulating specific hypotheses, we must depend upon a scattering of middle-range theoretical propositions derived from a few of the most releveant studies.

The research involving legislative cohesion and work done on school boards by David Minar and by Jennings and Zeigler suggest that the socio-economic complexity of the constituency (school district) is probably the most important external variable explaining the extent of cohesion. This assertion is supported by the Canon-Jaros study of state supreme courts and is also in line with the recent research in state politics by Dye, Sharkansky, and others. Somewhat less important as an external variable would be the social status of the district. This relationship is supported in the literature only by the research of Minar but seems to be in line with the studies just cited (to the extent that socio-economic variables are emphasized over political variables).

Less important as an external factor would be the third variable, electoral competition. We make this argument not only because of recent studies

[32] Malcolm E. Jewell and Samuel C. Patterson, *The Legislative Process in the United States* (New York: Random House, 1966), pp. 422-26.

[33] See Charles C. Jones, "Representation in Congress: The Case of the House Agriculture Committee," *American Political Science Review*, 5 7(June, 1961), pp. 358-67.

[34] Heinz Eulau, "The Informal Organization of Decision Structures in Small Legislative Bodies," *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, 13 (August, 1969), pp. 341-66.

[35] Barber, pp. 104-108.

[36] Minar, Chapter 7.

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which demonstrate that social and economic variables appear more powerful than political ones but also because of the apparent lack of meaningful competition for school board positions.[37] The fact that we are dealing in this study with non-partisan competition could make this variable even less significant, although there is evidence that non-partisan elections are often as competitive as partisan elections.[38] However, competition must be included in the analysis since it signifies the most direct link between the decision-making body and the constituency.

Two internal features relating to collegial decision-making have been chosen for examination. The first, "superintendent-dominance," taps the important power and leadership dimensions of group life. Obviously, the leadership concept has received substantial attention, both in the small-group literature and in the political science literature involving legislatures and judges.[39] In the educational literature, the superintendent is sometimes considered the task leader of the board,[40] even though he is not actually a member of the group. Because the superintendent has been considered so important in school board decision-making, especially in Kentucky,[41] we expect this variable to be the stronger one. The other internal variable, shared attitudes, has also been considered an important determinative of cohesion by political scientists and social psychologists.[42] We include it here in order to examine a number of attitudinal dimensions, both political and non-political.

In order to resolve the question of whether the internal or external variables are more powerful, we introduce a third set of intervening variables in order to define under what conditions each type of variable might be expected to dominate. These three variables–*perceived demand*, *perceived competition*, and *tenure in office*–are familiar to political scientists because of their importance as inputs to the "systems approach" to politics. However, in this research situation, we conceptualize them as "insulation" variables. When they operate to insulate the school board from external factors, the internal variables would be expected to dominate. Conversely, when they operate to expose the decision-makers to the external variables, then external

[37] Philip Meranto, *School Politics in the Metropolis* (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill, 1970), pp. 8-9.

[38] See especially, Eugene C. Lee, *The Politics of Nonpartisanship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960).

[39] Shepherd, pp. 81-85. See also Sidney Verba, *Small Groups and Political Behavior: A Study of Leadership* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961). From among the political science research cited in Chapter I, see especially the studies by Danelski and Murphy.

[40] Michael P. Thomas, "Interaction Process Analysis of Administrator-School Board Relationships" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1960), p. 88.

[41] See, for example, John Ed Pearce, "A Dynastic Family at the Crossroads," *The Louisville Courier-Journal and Times Magazine*, Aug. 30, 1970, pp. 8-13, 32-36, for background on one such dominant superintendent, Marie Turner of Breathitt County.

[42] Shepherd, pp. 26-27; Dorwin Cartwright, p. 107; David Danelski "Task Group and Social Group on the Supreme Court," *Micropolitics*, (ed.) John H. Kessel, *et al.* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), pp. 213, 215.

variables should be more significant.[43] For example, on a school board where members perceive relatively little demand from their constituents, we would expect that the characteristics of the school district would have relatively little impact on the extent of school board cohesion, but that internal factors like shared attitudes would be relatively more important than on boards which were not insulated in this way.

Specific Hypotheses and Research Design

The specific hypotheses which have been formulated to answer the question of what external and internal variables contribute to school board cohesion are listed below:

External Variable Relationships

External Variable Relationships

1. The socio-economic complexity of the school district will be positively associated with school board conflict.
2. The social status of the school district will be inversely related to school board conflict.
3. Electoral competition will be positively associated with board conflict.

Internal Variable Relationships

4. Conflict will tend not be present on superintendent-dominated boards. Superintendent-dominance will include three dimensions, each to be considered separately:
   a. Boards on which a plurality of members are superintendent-recruited.
   b. Boards where opposition to the superintendent is non-existent or extremely weak.
   c. Boards on which members defer to the superintendent in most substantive areas of concern (division-of-labor).
5. Widely shared attitudes among members of a board will be inversely related to conflict. Widely-shared attitudes include the following dimensions:
   a. Agreement on a series of items involving attitudes toward contemporary political-educational issues.
   b. Agreement on representational role orientation.

[43] This conceptualization is suggested in Bardley C. Canon and Dean Jaros, "External Variables, Institutional Structure, and Dissent on State Supreme Courts," *Polity*, 3 (Winter, 1970), pp. 178-81; and in Herbert Jacob, "Judicial Insulation: Elections, Direct Participation, and Public Attention to the Courts in Wisconsin," *Wisconsin Law Review*, 1966, pp. 801-19. However, in both of these studies, the "insulation" variables are more institutional in nature.

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Controlling for Insulation Variables

Each hypothesized relationship will be subjected to controls isolating boards which are insulated from those which are non-insulated. The condition of insulation will occur when members of a board perceive relatively weak demands from their constituents and relatively low levels of competition for board positions, and when the board has a relatively long tenure, measured in median years of service. The control variables will be expected to strengthen the external variable relationships when boards are *non-insulated* and strengthen the internal variable relationships when boards are *insulated*. Their specific impact on the original relationships should be as follows:

1a) The relationship between district complexity and board cohesion will be strengthened for non-insulated boards and weakened for insulated boards.

2a) The relationship between district status and board cohesion will be strengthened for non-insulated boards and weakened for insulated boards.

3a) The relationship between electoral competition and board cohesion will be strengthened for non-insulated boards and weakened for insulated boards.

4a) The relationship between superintendent-dominance and board cohesion will be strengthened for insulated boards and weakened for non-insulated boards.

5a) The relationship between shared attitudes and board cohesion will be strengthened for insulated boards and weakened for non-insulated boards.

The rationale for each of the hypotheses was sketched out briefly above. At this point, we need to explore each hypothesized relationship a bit more thoroughly. The linkage between social and economic complexity and the absence of cohesion is based on the assumption that in a more heterogenous society it is more possible that the makeup of the school board will reflect this heterogeneity with a diversity of belief and attitude among individual members. In addition, individual board members might be expected to take actions which they perceive might please the diverse interests which will be likely to exist in a heterogeneous environment. Furthermore, it seems likely that the kinds of issues and problems which emerge in a district characterized by social diversity might be manifested in board conflict, even though board members might try desperately to "keep the lid on."

The linkage between district social status and cohesion is based on the assumption that in a high status district it is more probable that conflict-management skills would be valued and possessed by school board members. Thus conflict would be suppressed and cohesion achieved.

As indicated earlier, the linkage between electoral competition and low cohesion is based on more tenuous assumptions. Electoral competition would probably reflect more open and well-defined political conflicts in the district which might well be reflected in conflicts on the board. The study of Jennings and Zeigler on interest group activity in public school politics gave

some indication that this may be the case, since competitiveness tends to bring boards and interest groups into closer contact.[44]

The linkage between superintendent dominance and board cohesion is well-supported in both the school board literature and in research involving strong leadership (especially task leadership) and group behavior generally. Our dimensions of superintendent dominance include aspects of *recruitment*, *division-of-labor*, and *opposition*. For *recruitment*, we are suggesting that the most dominated boards will have a substantial number of superintendent-recruited members. In addition, the literature suggests that superintendents can often dominate self-recruited members as easily as those who are superintendent-recruited, since self-recruited members usually attempt to represent the entire community (rather than "special interests") and when this role-conception is translated into decision-making, it usually means submitting to the judgment of the professionals when it comes to the making of important educational decisions.[45] Only board members who are "other-recruited" present a genuine threat to this superintendent because they may, in many cases, be representing various groups or interests within the constituency, some of which are likely to be overtly anti-superintendent, and probably these members would be less likely to adopt the no-conflict norm.[46] Thus the most cohesive boards should be those with the most superintendent-recruited members and the least cohesive boards those with the most other-recruited members.

The other two dimensions of superintendent dominance are fairly obvious. We are suggesting that where there is significant opposition to the superintendent, his dominance is clearly in question, and conflict rather than cohesion is likely to result. Our dimension of *division-of-labor* involves an assessment of how readily board members are willing to defer to the superintendent's judgment in a number of various substantive areas over which they, as board members, have at least some legal responsibility. If they are willing to so defer, superintendent-dominance is confirmed and cohesion is the expected result. If, however, they assert their responsibility to any significant degree, challenging the superintendent's dominance, conflict would be the expected consequence.

The fifth hypothesis, which stresses the importance of shared attitudes and values as contributors to cohesion, is one which emerges from the small group theory of social psychology discussed earlier. Because of Barber's arguments about the inapplicability of this theory to real life political behavior, we expect this hypothesized relationship to be weaker than those relationships involving *superintendent dominance*. Items selected for testing

[44] Jennings and Zeigler, p. 25.

[45] The most penetrating analysis of this phenomenon is presented in Norman D. Kerr, "The School Board as an Agency of Legitimation," *Sociology of Education*, 38 (Fall, 1964, pp. 34-59. See also the Eliot article cited earlier.

[46] See Frank E. Williamson, "A Study of the Causes of Discordant School Boards" (Unpublished Ed.D. Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1961), and Edward M. Tuttle, *School Board Leadership in America* (Danville, Ill.: Interstate Printers and Publishers, 1958), pp. 30-31.

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this hypothesis involve a rather wide range of topics for which the degree of intra-group agreement will be measured. We are most concerned with discovering which of these issues is most relevant to board conflict.

The original five hypotheses are re-stated (in hypotheses 1a-5a) to account for the effects of the control variables. Essentially, the control variables should strengthen the external variable relationships (hypotheses 1-3) when boards are non-insulated and weaken them when boards are insulated. Conversely, the internal variable relationships (hypotheses 4-5) are expected to be strengthened when boards are insulated and weakened when boards are non-insulated. These expectations are based on the obvious assumption that if a school board member is insulated from his constituency by one or more factors, he is more likely to make his decision on the basis of features internal to the group, but if he is left relatively "exposed" to constituency pressures and demands, these external factors will be considered when decisions are made.

Operationalizing of Variables and Data Collection

Dependent Variable

In order to build upon Eulau's research on city councils, the dependent variable was operationally defined in this study using his measure of decisional conflict. The use of sociometric items on the questionnaire which was administered to school board members allowed each board to be categorized as *bipolar*, when there are two consistent and identifiable blocs on the board, *unipolar* when no apparent conflict exists, or *nonpolar*, when conflict exists without discernible patterns or consistent blocs.[47] Thus, cohesion was operationalized as an ordinal variable, with bipolar meaning *least cohesive*, nonpolar *moderately cohesive*, and unipolar *most cohesive*.[48] Of the fifty-seven school boards included in the sample, seventeen (29.8%) were found to be unipolar, twenty-six (45.6%) nonpolar, and fourteen (24.6%) bipolar.

External Variables

For *socio-economic complexity*, three different measures have been used. The simplest measure employs a method adapted from the Jennings-Zeigler study,[49] whereby school districts were divided into three categories: metropolitan, if the school district was located in a metropolitan county; urban, if

[47] See Eulau, pp. 347-50 for a discussion of the typology and an example of one sociometric item adapted for this study.

[48] To be more explicit, boards were categorized as follows: A *bipolar* board is one in which at least 50% of the respondents acknowledge "substantial conflict" on Q. 17 (i.e., that their board "occasionally is not unanimous" or that it is "more often split than unanimous") and at least 50% also observed consistent blocs on Q. 21 and/or Q. 22. A *nonpolar* board was one where at least 50% of the members perceived "substantial conflict" on Q. 17 or gave clear indications on Q. 20, 21, or 22 that serious conflict was present, but blocs were not acknowledged or were inconsistently defined. On a *unipolar* board, no more than one member observed any substantial conflict; in most cases, no member reported any at all.

[49] Jennings and Zeigler, pp. 12-13.

the school district contained a city of at least 10,000; and rural, if the district did not contain a city over 10,000. Jennings and Zeigler found that simply dichotomizing social complexity into metropolitan and non-metropolitan enabled them to account for variance in the dependent variable just as well as using more precise census bureau data. We added a third category, urban, because of the fact that there are so few Kentucky school districts in metropolitan counties. However, the urban category produced only four school districts, resulting in a sample which included twelve metropolitan districts, four urban districts, and forty-one rural districts. In some parts of the analysis, this necessitated combining the urban and metropolitan districts.

Other measures of social complexity involved school district enrollment size and the proportion of Negroes in the district. For these measures, cutting points were made to allow relatively equal distribution among four categories for each variable.

For *social status*, census bureau data were collected for each district on levels of median education and family income, and cutting points were established as above. The "social status" variable combined the measures for education and income into a single ranking.

For *electoral competition*, the proportion of votes cast for losing candidates for the school board in the last four elections (1964-70) was determined for each district. Districts were ranked and divided into four categories with cutting points made on the basis of percentages.

Internal (Group) Variables

Three measures were used for *superintendent-dominance*. *Recruitment* was measured using two questions which allowed us to classify board members as self-recruited, other-recruited, or superintendent-recruited.[50] Each board was classified as to the dominant pattern of recruitment. For the second measure, the extent of opposition to the superintendent was classified into three categories, on the basis of responses to the relevant questionnaire item. Boards where no members opposed the superintendent (n=38) were compared with boards where one member was in opposition (n=8). The third measure, *division-of-labor*, involved a tabulation of responses to a multiple-response item on the questionnaire where board members were asked to assess the relative contribution to decision-making of the superintendent and board, in seven decisional areas. The "index of superintendent dominance" was based on an assessment of the number of board members who observed that decisions were made either entirely by the board or with the board "taking the lead" in joint superintendent-board decisions. Adding together the total number of these responses for each board member on each decisional area (controlling for the number of respondents per board resulted in a total possible number of 28 such responses) produced a very small number

[50] Respondents were asked if running for office was their own idea or if others had asked them to run. If an individual said it was his own idea, he was classified as self-recruited. If he indicated others had asked him, he was then asked if the superintendent was one of those who did so. If he responded "Yes", he was classified as superintendent-recruited, if "No", he was classified as other-recruited.

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for most boards.[51] One-third (19) of the boards had a total of no more than one such response (9 had 0, 10 and 1), another third had either two or three such responses (12 and 7 respectively), and the final third had between four and nine such responses (3, 4, 6, 3, 2, and 1 respectively). Thus, these three categories were labelled as "high," "moderate," and "low" superintendent dominance, respectively, for purposes of testing the hypothesis.

Two dimensions of *shared attitudes* were considered. The first involved whether attitudes toward representational role were widely shared. There are two basic types of role orientation. The "delegate" believes that a representative making a decision should do what the public wants, even if it is not his own personal preference; The "trustee" feels that he should use his own judgment, regardless of what his constituents want him to do. By using a questionnaire item, we were able to determine whether either the delegate or trustee role was held by all (or nearly all) of the board members, or whether no dominant pattern existed. Boards were originally classified as "unanimous," "near-unanimous," or "divided" with respect to role orientation, but the categories were revised because of the small number of delegate board members. Our sample of boards included thirty-two where all members considered themselves trustees, nineteen where there was just one delegate, and only six on which there was more than one delegate.

For the second dimension of shared attitudes, board members were asked to respond to a series of questions asking their opinions on certain contemporary issues in education, including desegregation, teacher participation, and federal and state control of education. From these responses, we were able to determine whether board members were in agreement on all these issues, some of them, or none of them. Boards were classified as *unanimous*, *near-unanimous* (all but one agreeing), and *divided* on each of these issues.

Control (Insulation) Variables

Using responses to three questionnaire items an index of *demand perception* ("demand" from their constituents) was constructed for each respondent (using a sum of item responses), and then for each board (by using the mean of the members' responses) which resulted in each board being classified as perceiving demands to be "very high," "high," "low," or "very low."

Perceived competition was measured using two questionnaire items. An index was constructed as with *demand perception* and ultimately each board was classified as perceiving "much," "some," or "little" competition.

The third control variable simply involved the median number of years of service or *tenure* for each board, calculated from member responses to the questionnaire. When the controls were used in the analysis, each of these variables was dichotomized, with the two top and the two bottom categories collapsed into one for *perceived demand*, and the "some" and "little"

[51] Originally we had intended to characterize the division-of-labor in *each* of the seven areas of decision-making. However, since superintendent dominance of most boards was so great in every area examined this combined measure seemed to be the best alternative to measure board participation in decision-making in a general way.

categories collapsed into one for perceived competition. For the *tenure* variable, less than six years of service was defined as "low," and six years of service or more as "high."

Data Collection

The decision to use a mail questionnaire as the primary source of data was deemed necessary for reasons of the judicious use of time and resources. It was felt that in order to study a large enough number of school boards, a questionnaire distributed by mail was the only feasible alternative, given the financial resources of the researcher. Questionnaires were sent to all board members in Kentucky, a total of 960 individuals serving on 192 school boards.[52] Accompanying the questionnaire was a letter of explanation from the author and a letter of endorsement from the Kentucky School Boards Association. The response rate was very encouraging. A total of 528 respondents returned their questionnaires before the coding and data processing procedures were completed (two more were received too late to be included). Thus a 55% rate of response was achieved, and data were thereby generated in sufficient quantity to allow meaningful analysis to proceed.

The researcher felt that for a school board to be included in the sample used for analysis, at least four of its five members would have to respond to the questionnaire. Fifty-seven boards met this criterion, forty-six where four members responded and eleven where all five members responded. This self-selected sample is subject to some suspicion, since one might suspect that boards where this kind of interest and cooperation occurred may be atypical of all boards in the state. These suspicions are probably unwarranted, since our boards represent some of the richest districts in the state and some of the poorest, some of the largest and some of the smallest, and the districts included do not appear to present any geographic bias. For example, eighteen of the boards are from districts in Western Kentucky, twenty-one in Central and Northern Kentucky (approximately between Louisville and Lexington), and another eighteen in Eastern Kentucky. Thus the available evidence seems to confirm that our sample was resonably representative.

CONFLICT AND COHESION: THE IMPACT OF EXTERNAL VARIABLES

In this section, we consider various school district characteristics and their effects on intra-board conflict. The dependent variable, *intra-board conflict*, involves a 3-way classification—unipolar, nonpolar, and bipolar—and each of the fifty-seven school boards in the sample has been so classified. It may be recalled that the dependent variable has been defined ordinally, with unipolarity representing the least intra-board conflict and bipolarity representing the most intra-board conflict. While this section attempts to explain

[52] During the process of collecting data, two school districts were merged with other districts, leaving a total of 190 districts existing in Kentucky at the present time. All but five of these 190 school boards produced at least one respondent.

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differences in the dependent variable by examining external (district) variables, the next section will examine the impact of internal variables, i.e., characteristics of the group (school board) itself.

We begin by examining measures of socio-economic complexity, which we have hypothesized will be directly related to school board conflict. Variables to be considered here are *metropolitanism*, *district enrollment*, and the *proportion of Negroes* in the district. The findings indicated that the relationships between these variables and cohesion were generally weak, although there were a few promising tendencies in the expected direction. Of the complexity measures, *metropolitanism* had the greatest impact. While the small number of urban and metropolitan school districts makes it impossible to draw any firm conclusions, it seems apparent that the rural boards tend to manifest less conflict than do the urban and metropolitan boards. Less than 20% of the rural boards were classified as *bipolar* while nearly 40% of the urban and metropolitan boards were so classified. The rural districts also have a slightly higher proportion of unipolar boards.

The data involving district enrollment and polarity showed that there was a slight tendency for the largest school districts (over 5000 enrollment) to have a higher proportion of bipolar boards, as expected. However, the remainder of the configuration was quite inconsistent, resulting in a rather inconsequential measure of association. This rather weak relationship indicates that the enrollment of the school district has little impact on school board conflict or cohesion. This finding may result from the fact that Kentucky has only three very large districts[53] and only one of these was included in our sample.

The relationship involving the percentage of Negroes in the district and polarity was not only weak but it was not in the direction predicted. While we expected to find the most conflict where the proportion of Negroes was greatest, we found the highest percentage of bipolar boards (30.8%) in districts with less than 1% Negro. Similarly, in districts with the largest proportion of Negroes we found relatively more unipolar boards and few bipolar boards. It appears, therefore, that the kinds of conflict generated by relatively large numbers of blacks in a given area are not reflected in the conflict which emerges among school board members. This conclusion is reinforced by other findings, relating to board members' attitudes toward desegregation, which are presented below.

Next we take up measures of social status, which we had predicted would be inversely related to school board conflicts. Here we were concerned with district education, district income, and a combined income-education measure we have labelled "social status." The data for district education measure we have labelled "social status." The data for district education and intra-board cohesion showed a very slight relationship in the predicted direction with a relatively large number of inconsistencies. We found the

[53] The three districts and their 1971-72 enrollment are: Jefferson County, 95, 589; Louisville Independent, 50, 616; and Fayette County, 36, 370. The next largest district, Pike County, had 16,120.

fewest unipolar boards in the districts with the lowest educational levels (as expected) but the largest proportion of these low-conflict boards were found in districts with moderately high education levels (10.5 to 11.9), not in the most highly educated districts. Similarly, the highest proportion of bipolar boards were found, not in the least educated districts, but in districts which rank moderately low in education level (9.0 to 10.4). Thus, district education has a rather marginal impact on board cohesion.

The relationship between income and conflict was slightly stronger than the one just discussed, and in the expected direction, but subject to the same kinds of inconsistencies. Here the districts ranking lowest in income levels had substantially fewer low-conflict, unipolar boards than any of the other groups. However, the proportion of bipolar boards was similar for all income levels except for districts of moderately high income ($7500-8999 median family income). Only one-eighth of these districts had bipolar boards while each of the other income levels produced about one-third of these high-conflict boards. There was also a fairly consistent pattern established when the nonpolar boards were considered, with these types of boards varying from 33.3% in the high income category to 6.5% in the low income category.

The strongest bivariate relationship discovered using the external variables occurred when district social status was considered. This variable was constructed by taking a mean of the income and education categories and produced a stronger relationship than either of these two variables considered by themselves. Here we observed that there was a consistent increase in the proportion of unipolar boards as we moved from "very low" status districts (9.1%) to "very high" status districts (44.4%). A similar pattern could be observed by examining the proportion of bipolar boards, although the differences were not as striking and there was one inconsistency, the "very high" social status districts having a slightly higher proportion of bipolar boards than the "high" status districts. Thus, while achieving only a moderately strong negative association with conflict, social status emerged as the most important external characteristic. This seems to indicate that this measure, which assumes that a relatively high level of *either* income or education will elevate social status, taps a dimension of the school district-board relationship which could not be accomplished by any of the other external measures.

The final external variable to be considered is the extent of competition for school board positions, as indicated by the proportion of votes cast for losing candidates from 1964 to 1970. The data revealed a relatively weak association in the hypothesized direction, indicating that competition was related positively to conflict. While there were still inconsistencies, observation of the proportion of both the bipolar and unipolar boards reveals a fairly coherent pattern. The low-conflict, unipolar boards varied from 14.3% in the high competition districts (40% and above) to 41.2% in the low competition districts (under 20%), while conversely, the low cohesion bipolar boards varied from slightly more than 10% in districts with little competition to over 40% in the highly competitive districts.

In summary, bivariate relationships involving external variables demonstrated only a marginal impact on the dependent variable, intra-board con-

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TABLE 1

EXTERNAL VARIABLES AND POLARITY

Variables	Gamma Value	Direction	Significance level[a]
Social Status	-.306	as predicted	.05
District Income	-.261	as predicted	.08
District Competition	.244	as predicted	.09
Metropolitanism	.214	as predicted	n.s. ($p>.10$)
District Education	-.182	as predicted	n.s.
District Enrollment	.158	as predicted	n.s.
Per Cent Negro	-.143	not as predicted	n.s.

[a] Based on calculating a z-value for gamma.

flict. While each of these variables except *per cent Negro* were associated with conflict in the predicted direction, only *social status* produced a statistically significant relationship (see Table 1). District income, competition, and metropolitanism produced sufficiently strong relationships to indicate that they could be promising variables for further research, and it will be seen that controls did substantiate their utility to some extent. After examining the effect of the control variables on these relationships, we present an assessment of the overall impact of district characteristics.

External Variables and the Insulation of School Boards

Each of the relationships between the external variables and board conflict was controlled for perceived demand, perceived competition, and length of service in such a way as to distinguish between insulated boards and non-insulated boards. A board was characterized as insulated when its members perceived relatively little demand in their school district and relatively significant competition for school board positions and when the median number of years service for board members was relatively high (six years or above). For boards so characterized, we expected the relationships between external variables and conflict to diminish since their members would be more likely to be insensitive to the demands, needs, and diversities of the district, which are reflected in the external variables. Conversely, for boards characterized as non-insulated (*high perceived demand, high perceived competition, low median years service*), we expected the relationships to be strenthened. Because of the small sample size, control variables were dichotomized and no attempt was made to control for more than one variable at a time.

Generally, the controls for *perceived demand* and for *median years service* operated as expected for district *social status*, district *competition*, *metropolitanism*, and district *education*. The controls for *perceived competi-*

tion did not operate as expected for any of the external variables. When changes occurred in the original relationships, they occurred in the opposite direction than was expected. That is, boards where members seemed to perceive little competition (n=32) tended to be more influenced by external variables than those whose members perceived much competition (n=25). These findings, while unexpected, are actually in line with literature involving the relationship between legislators (particularly Congressmen) and their constituents. Warren Miller, for example, has argued that representatives in competitive districts are forced by the lack of clear constituency cues to rely on their own attitudes and sometimes they will even "virtually ignore what they think to be their district preferences."[54] While the evidence on this is conflicting, it is safe to conclude that in many situations, including the present case of Kentucky school boards, electorally secure representatives are more likely to be attuned to constituency opinion than are those who represent more competitive constituencies.[55] Thus, it appears that our original conceptualization was inadequate at this point. A closer and more perceptive reading of the literature might have more logically led to the conceptualizing of board members who perceive *greater* competition as being "insulated" rather than the electorally secure being so considered.

The rest of this section focuses on the controls for *perceived demand* and *tenure*, where the findings were more in line with hypothesized expectations. The data for the relationship between *district social status* and *conflict* controlled for *perceived demand* show that the original relationship, which was moderately strong, was somewhat stronger for the non-insulated boards, as was predicted. For this group in the low and very low status districts, bipolar boards were the most numerous and there were very few unipolar boards in these categories. On the other hand, only twenty per cent of the boards in the very high and high status were classified as bipolar. The relationship for the high-insulated boards was still relatively strong but somewhat lower than the original relationship.

When the *social status-cohesion* relationship was controlled for *median years service*, the distinction between insulated and non-insulated boards was even more marked. For boards with less experienced members (i.e., non-insulated), there was a strong relationship between the social status of the district and intra-board cohesion. The most meaningful finding here is that there are no unipolar boards for either low or very low status districts. In locating bipolar boards, however, we found that they were much more prevalent in the low social status districts than in high status districts. Controlling for *length of service* diminished the original relationship among high-insulated boards even more than did controlling for *perceived demand;* for boards whose members had more experience, the relationship between *social status* and *conflict* was reduced to a very slight one.

[54] Warren E. Miller, "Majority Rule and The Representative System of Government," mimeo, p. 22.

[55] Jewell and Patterson, p. 441.

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Next, we consider the relationship between *district competition* and *conflict*, when controlled for *perceived demand*. As before, the original relationship was greatly strengthened for the non-insulated boards whose members perceived much demand in their district, but the relationship essentially disappeared among insulated (low *demand perception*) boards. For the first group there was a steady increase in the proportion of bipolar boards as we moved from less competitive to more competitive districts. Conversely, there were no unipolar boards in the most competitive districts and the highest proportion of these low-conflict boards was found in the least competitive districts. For the second group (low perceived demand) it may be observed that there was no such consistent pattern of board conflict for insulated boards.

The relationship between *district competition* and *polarity* when controlled for *median years service* resulted in a slightly stronger relationship for non-insulated boards than for insulated boards as predicted. However, the distinction between the two groups was slight.

The data for *metropolitanism* and *cohesion*, controlled for *perceived demand*, are interesting. The introduction of this control increased the strength of this relationship from a relatively weak association to the strongest relationship discovered among the entire set of external variables, when the non-insulated boards were considered. Even though the distribution of these data resulted in extremely small cell frequencies, there was a clear tendency for the urban and metropolitan boards to be bipolar while the rural boards were much more likely to be unipolar or nonpolar. For the insulated boards (low perceived demand), on the other hand, this tendency was completely negated with the measure of association actually becoming negative, indicating a slight inverse relationship between *metropolitanism* and *conflict*.

A similar picture emerges when the *metropolitanism-cohesion* relationship is controlled for *median length of service*. Again the original relationship was strengthened for non-insulated boards, in this case, boards with less-experienced members. The relationship was substantially weakened for the insulated boards whose members have longer tenure in office. For non-insulated boards, while four of the eleven metropolitan and urban boards were high-conflict bipolar, only three of the nineteen rural boards were so classified. Similarly, only two of the eleven metropolitan and urban boards were classified in the low-conflict, unipolar category while six of the nineteen rural boards were unipolar. For insulated boards the original relationship essentially "washed out" and no consistent pattern was readily identifiable.

Finally, we consider the relationship between *district education* and *conflict*, controlled for *board insulation*. The explanatory power of district education as an external variable was greatly enhanced when controls for *length of service*[56] were introduced, since a relatively weak original relation

[56] Controlling for perceived demand resulted in differences in the predicted pattern—a weaker relationship for insulated boards (.105) than for non-insulated boards (.249). These data are not presented since the differences are not nearly as striking as when controls for median years service are introduced.

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ship increased to a substantially stronger association for the non-insulated boards and disappeared entirely for insulated boards. The proportion of unipolar boards decreased from 42.9% in districts with very high education levels (12.0 and above) to 37.5% in moderately high education level categories of districts. While the pattern is not as consistent for bipolar boards, clearly there were proportionately more of these high conflict boards in the low-education categories (4 of 11) than in the two high-education categories (2 of 15). No consistent pattern emerges for boards with more experienced members, establishing our contention that *district education* does not contribute to *conflict* in insulated boards.

The relationships between the external variables and *intra-board cohesion*, controlled for insulation variables, are summarized in Tables 2 and 3. Table 2 considers the control for *perceived demand* and Table 3 considers the control for *median years service*. From these data, we observe that each of these two control variables operated as predicted slightly more often than not; specifically, both controls had the expected effect on the relationships involving *social status, district competition, district education*, and *metropolitanism*, but not on *district income, district enrollment*, and *per cent Negro*. These controls, then, increase slightly the utility of the external variables by demonstrating that *district competition, education* and *metropolitanism* may have substantial impact upon board conflict and cohesion under certain conditions. Thus, the controls contribute to our understanding of the relationship between school district characteristics and school board conflict.

In assessing the overall utility of external variables in explaining *board cohesion*, we must conclude that the results were mixed and rather unspectacular. While each of the three hypotheses has been confirmed to the extent that we have found measures for each of the three external variables, *social status, socio-economic complexity*, and *competition*, which have associated in the predicted direction with the dependent variable, *conflict*, this has not occurred with each measure, and most of the relationships have not been statistically significant. The *social status* of the district emerged as the single most important external characteristic related to *board conflict* with *district competition, education*, and *metropolitansim* also producing some relationships. However, it is obvious that external, district characteristics do not provide striking and consistent linkages to this aspect of collegial decision-making. We can probably infer from these findings that school board members pay less attention to their constituencies than other political decision-makers, particularly when they are involved in decisions which result in group conflict. We must look to the group itself, then, to see if determinants of conflict or cohesion are more apparent in that milieu. Internal, group variables provide the subject of the next section.

CONFLICT AND COHESION: THE IMPACT OF INTERNAL VARIABLES

In this chapter, we consider the impact of internal variables, i.e., the

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TABLE 2

EXTERNAL VARIABLES AND POLARITY CONTROLLED FOR PERCEIVED DEMAND (gamma values)

Variables	Perceived Demand High		Low	As Predicted
Social Status	-.348	(-.306)[a]	-.292	yes
District Income	-.176	(-.261)	-.368	no
District Competition	.409	(.244)	-.027	yes
Metropolitanism	.478	(.214)	-.128	yes
District Education	-.249	(-.182)	-.105	yes
District Enrollment	-.154	(.158)	.474	no
Per Cent Negro	-.170	(-.143)	-.045	no

[a]Original relationships (uncontrolled gamma values) presented in parentheses.

TABLE 3

EXTERNAL VARIABLES AND POLARITY CONTROLLED FOR MEDIAN YEARS SERVICE (gamma values)

Variables	Median Years Service Low		High	As Predicted
Social Status	-.423	(-.306)[a]	-.132	yes
District Income	-.150	(-.261)	-.431	no
District Competition	.276	(.244)	.225	yes
Metropolitanism	.329	(.214)	.037	yes
District Education	-.447	(-.182)	.050	yes
District Enrollment	.089	(.158)	.261	no
Per Cent Negro	-.338	(-.143)	.017	no

[a]Original relationships (uncontrolled gamma values) presented in parentheses.

characteristics of the group itself, upon intra-board conflict. The general categories of variables examined were of relationships to the superintendent, and several measures involving "shared attitudes." Dimensions of the relationship of the superintendent to the school board included recruitment, superintendent dominance, and the degree of opposition to the superintendent. Shared attitudes encompassed the following dimensions: agreement on representational role orientation and the inter-group agreement on four contemporary issues, the role of the federal government in education, the role of the state government (in this case, Kentucky) in education, the speed of desegregation, and teacher participation.

The first internal variable to be considered was *method of recruitment*. We had hypothesized that a school board which was "superintendent-recruited" would be most cohesive; one which was "self-recruited" would have moderate conflict, and one which was dominated by "other-recruited" board members would have the most conflict. Unfortunately, the data did not allow us to test the hypothesis for two reasons: there were a large number of boards where no dominant pattern of recruitment emerged, and of the remaining boards there was a preponderance of other-recruited boards and only a few of the other two types. The data did not indicate that there was any substantial difference in cohesion between the other-recruited boards and the small number (6) of superintendent-recruited and self-recruited boards.

We must conclude, therefore, that *recruitment* as we have measured it does not seem to explain adequately the presence of conflict for those groups of decision-makers. We suspect that the main reason for this involved the lack of superintendent-recruited members on the 57 boards participating in the study. There were simply not enough of these board members to have any significant impact on a sufficient number of boards and thus allow this variable to produce any meaningful results in analysis.

Next we consider the impact of *superintendent dominance* on *group conflict*. We had hypothesized that the more dominant the superintendent, the more cohesive the board. The data did not substantiate this hypothesis. Where the superintendent's dominance was the greatest, the proportion of unipolar boards was greatest, as expected. It was the boards which had *moderate* superintendent dominance which manifested the most conflict, however, having the fewest unipolar boards and the largest proportion of bipolar boards. Thus, observing the proportion of bipolar boards, we found a curvilinear relationship occuring, with relatively low conflict for both high and low *superintendent dominance* and relatively high *conflict* for the intermediate category of *superintendent dominance*. This finding suggests the possibility that where either the superintendent or the board establish a degree of supremacy cohesion is maintained, but that where uncertainty exists about which will be dominant, a situation of conflict is more likely to occur.

The last dimension of the board-superintendent relationship to be considered was *opposition to the superintendent*. We found the relationship between *conflict* and *opposition to the superintendent* to be a strong and consistent one. When we examined boards with much opposition (two or more members opposed), we discovered that all (5) of them were bipolar, indicating the difficulty of achieving cohesion when there is extensive opposition to the superintendent. Conversely, among boards with no opposition to be superintendent, only two of thirty-eight boards were bipolar, while over 40% were unipolar. On boards where moderate opposition existed, board conflict was evident but it was not as widespread as among boards where opposition was greatest. Thus, the strongest relationship for this set of internal variables, and the only dimension of board-superintendent relationships which clearly helps to explain group cohesion, involves the number of board members who oppose the superintendent. While this relationship is

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subject to the likely criticism that these two variables to a degree measure the same characteristic,[57] we would argue that for most boards this is not necessarily the case and that the data themselves demonstrate that, in fact, different dimensions of behavior are being measured. This is most easily seen by the fact that some of both the nonpolar and bipolar boards fall in the category of boards where no members opposed the superintendent. Therefore, it is clear that a major correlate of school board conflict is *opposition to the superintendent*, which reinforces our earlier assertions about the centrality of the superintendent in the decision-making process of school boards in Kentucky.[58]

Now we turn to the other set of internal variables, each of which involved a dimension of shared attitudes among group members. We had hypothesized, on the basis of the small-group literature which indicated that shared attitudes promote cohesion, that boards on which all members held the same representational role orientation would manifest less conflict than boards where this kind of unanimity did not exist. However, similar to the situation with recruitment, there was an extremely uneven distribution of responses on the role orientation item, with the result that our sample included a majority of unanimous "trustee" boards and no boards with a unanimity of "delegates." Moreover, there appeared almost no relationship between *shared role orientation* and *conflict;* in fact, there was a slight tendency in the opposite direction to that predicted, in that on boards where there was least agreement there seemed to be the least conflict, although this represented only six boards. The most likely explanation for this is the lopsided distribution. With such a high proportion of trustees, the *role-orientation* variable was rendered quite useless for explaining variation in *levels of conflict.*

Of the four variables involving *agreement on contemporary issues*, the one which was most closely associated with intra-board conflict involved the item dealing with board members' attitudes toward the role of the federal government. Boards which are divided on this issue are much more likely to have serious conflict than those boards which are unanimous or near-unanimous (only one member not agreeing with the others). Of the small number (4) of unanimous boards, none was classified as bipolar, and only 13% of the near-unanimous boards (n=23) were in the bipolar category. Among the divided boards, on the other hand, more than one-third were bipolar, and only five of these thirty were unipolar.

Therefore, it appears that the attitudes of board members toward the role of the federal government in education reflect a dimension of the group

[57] The question involving opposition to the superintendent was one of a series of questions used to categorize boards into the three polarity categories. This question was in fact used for only four boards where members did not answer the agree/disagree question but acknowledged conflict and/or consistent division. These four boards are eliminated from the analysis of superintendent opposition, here and later in the section.

[58] This is somewhat suggestive of the work of Miller and Stokes involving the kinds of issues for which there was most agreement between Congressmen and constituency. See Warren E. Miller and Donald Stokes, "Constituency Influence in Congress," *American Political Science Review*, 57 (March, 1963), especially p. 49.

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interaction process which is quite salient to the conflict which exists within the group. The federal government's role in education, particularly in the area of federal aid, has been the subject of conflict among educators for many years. This controversy reached its peak in the years prior to the passage by congress of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The issue of federal aid has been quite complex, involving highly volatile subjects including religion (aid to parochial schools) and race as well as the more general problem of resolving fears about "federal control." Overcoming obstacles to federal aid seemed to hinge more on the specific issues (race and religion) than on the general one. Conflict over federal aid arose within the educational establishment, with the National School Board Association expressing opposition and several other groups, most notably the National Education Association, being in favor of federal aid. Thus, it is not surprising to find this issue emerging as a key indicator of decisional conflict for our sample of school boards.

Other issue variables were not as powerful here but became more important when controls were introduced. The relationships between conflict and attitudes toward the role of state government in education and between conflict and views on teacher participation were in the predicted direction, but were substantially weaker than the one just discussed. Thus, we conclude that board members' attitudes regarding the role of state government in education and toward teacher participation reflect to a degree the type of conflict which arises on their school boards, but not to the extent that attitudes toward the federal government's role in education reflect this conflict.

Analysis of the relationship between agreement on the *speed of desegregation* and *cohesion* revealed a very slight relationship in the direction opposite to that which was predicted. For example, we found that the boards divided on desegregation had the highest proportion of unipolar boards. However, in most respects this configuration is full of inconsistencies and no discernible pattern emerges suggestive of a meaningful relationship. One possible reason for this could be the uneven distribution of boards for the independent variable, with nearly two-thirds of the cases being in the "divided boards" category. Since it is apparently quite difficult for boards to achieve unanimity or near-unanimity on this issue, this variable has less utility as a correlate of group conflict than it would if this were not the case. Probably a more plausible and important reason for the inconsistency of relationship is that this issue (desegregation) is not particularly relevant to this group of decision-makers, in that we are dealing with mostly rural school districts, approximately three-fourths of which have less than 10% Negro enrollment and only one of which has more than 20% Negro enrollment (and that just slightly more than 20%).

The entire set of bivariate relationships between internal variables and conflict are summarized in Table 4. As indicated earlier, opposition to the superintendent seems to tap an important element of the group process which is related to conflict and cohesion. However, since this relationship is somewhat obvious, it may be partially discounted. What cannot be discounted in

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TABLE 4

INTERNAL VARIABLES AND POLARITY

	Gamma Value	Direction	Significance level[a]
Relationship to Superintendent			
Superintendent Dominance	-.078	no relationship	n.s. (p>.10)
Opposition to Supt.	.886	as predicted	.001
Recruitment	.196	no relationship	n.s.
Shared Attitudes			
Role Orientation	.123	not as predicted	n.s.
Agreement-Federal Govt.	-.502	as predicted	.01
Agreement-State Govt.	-.302	as predicted	.08
Agreement-Teacher Militancy	-.252	as predicted	.10
Agreement-Desegregation	.179	not as predicted	n.s.

[a] Based on calculating a z-value for gamma.

Table 4 is the fact that three of the four issue areas produced fairly impressive relationships with the dependent variable. The *role of the federal government* emerged as the variable with the most promise, and this finding was discussed in the context of federal aid and the conflict engendered by this issue. The other two issue areas, involving *state government* and *teacher participation;* produced weaker relationships in the predicted direction. While *opposition to the superintendent* is obviously an important correlate of *group conflict*, it is the finding that *issues* are important which stands out at this point in the discussion.

INTERNAL VARIABLES AND THE INSULATION OF GROUP MEMBERS

At this point three control variables, which have been characterized as insulation variables, were introduced to determine their impact on the original, bivariate relationships. We have hypothesized that where the control variables, *perceived demand, perceived competition,* and *length of service,* operate to insulate the board from the environment, the original relationships (gamma values uncontrolled) will be strengthened, since the internal interaction of the group will be allowed to proceed without much regard to external pressures and demands. On the other hand, where the control variables operate to leave the board "non-insulated," the original relationships should be weaker, since the members of the group will be forced to consider the external environment when formulating their decisions.

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TABLE 5

INTERNAL VARIABLES AND POLARITY CONTROLLED FOR PERCEIVED COMPETITION[a]
(gamma value)

Variable	Perceived Competition High (Non-Insulated)		Low (Insulated)	As Predicted
Supt. Dominance	-.271	(-.078)	.041	No
Opposition to Supt.	.907	(.886)	.808	No
Role orientation	-.278	(.123)	.372	No
Agreement-Fed. Govt.	-.211	(-.502)	-.767	Yes
Agreement States Govt.	-.439	(-.302)	-.204	No
Agreement-Teacher Participation	-.269	(-.252)	-.232	No
Agreement-Desegregation	.240	(.179)	.521	No

[a]Original relationships (uncontrolled gamma values) presented in parentheses.

Generally, the control variables did not have a striking impact on the original relationships. The only relationship which was enhanced by the control for *perceived competition* (see Table 5) was the relationship between *agreement on the role of the federal government* and *board conflict*. For each of the other variables there either was relatively little change in the original relationship or the change was in the opposite direction to that which was predicted.

These findings reinforce our earlier discussion of the importance of the federal government and the issue of federal aid. However, it is somewhat puzzling to observe that *perceived competition*, which failed to operate effectively as a control variable eleswhere, worked quite well in this single instance. Evidently, attitudes toward the federal government reflect one dimension of the board members' decisional apparatus where the perception of competition is a salient factor, and board members who perceive relatively little competition do, in fact, behave as if they were "insulated," as our original conceptualization suggested. This is probably a consequence of the fact that the question of the role of the federal government in education, particularly the issue of federal aid, has been an explicitly *partisan* issue, and this "partisanship" is apparently manifested among local school boards in a concern about competition as decisions are made. Thus, where this issue is involved, school board members are probably more like political decision-makers at the state and national levels, in their concern about competition. On other issues, they revert back to their "normal" behavior of nonpartisanship, showing little concern about electoral competition.

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TABLE 6

INTERNAL VARIABLES AND POLARITY
CONTROLLED FOR MEDIAN YEARS SERVICE
(gamma values)

	Low (Non-Insulated)		High (Insulated)	As Predicted
Supt. Dominance	.247	(-.078)[a]	-.366	Yes
Opposition to Supt.	.776	(.886)	1.000	Yes
Role Orientation	.059	(.123)	.212	No
Agreement-Fed. Govt.	-.595	(-.502)	-.409	No
Agreement-State Govt.	-.346	(-.302)	-.246	No
Agreement-Desegregation	.065	(.179)	.358	No
Agreement-Teacher Militancy	-.309	(-.252)	-.168	No

[a]Original relationships (uncontrolled gamma values) present in parentheses.

The effect of *experience in office* as a control variable is summarized in Table 6. Here we observe that the strength of the relationships for both the superintendent-related variables was amplified in the expected direction, but the control variable did not operate as expected for any of the shared attitude variables; in fact, for several of these, the control variable operated in precisely the opposite manner to that which was predicted. This suggests that for boards where most members had served for a relatively short period of time shared attitudes were more indicative of cohesion than when members have served longer, perhaps because members of the latter type have focused their attention on the superintendent as being the most important source of internal cues for decision-making.

In tables 7 and 8, data for the two cases where *experience in office* as a control variable did operate as predicted are presented. In Table 7, we see that an initially strong (gamma=.886) relationship between *superintendent opposition* and *conflict* increased to a perfect relationship for the insulated boards, and diminished slightly (to .776) for non-insulated boards. These data need not be discussed further since both parts of Table 7 involve clear and consistent patterns, with the bottom of the table (for insulated boards) simply being more consistent. In Table 8, where there originally existed no relationship between *superintendent-dominance* and *conflict* (gamma = -.076), we now observe a relatively respectable relationship (-.366) between these two variables under the condition of longer experience. For these insulated boards at the bottom of Table 8, we observe a steady increase in the number of cohesive, unipolar boards as we move from less to more superintendent-dominance. Observing the bipolar boards, we see that there is a smaller proportion of these high-conflict boards among the group of boards most dominated by the superintendent, as expected. However, we note an

TABLE 7

OPPOSITION TO SUPERINTENDENT AND
POLARITY CONTROLLED FOR MEDIAN YEARS SERVICE

	Number Opposing Superintendent			
	None	One	Two or More	Total
A. Median Years Service Low (Less than 6.0)				
Unipolar	36.8%	14.3%	0.0%	28.6%
Nonpolar	57.9	42.9	0.0	50.0
Bipolar	5.3	42.9	100.0	21.4
	100.0%	100.1%	100.0%	100.0%
N =	19	7	2	28
Gamma = -.776				
B. Median Years Service High (6.0 or more)				
Unipolar	47.4%	0.0%	0.0%	36.0%
Nonpolar	47.4	0.0	0.0	36.0
Bipolar	5.3	100.0	100.0	28.0
	100.1%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
N =	19	3	3	25
Gamma = -1.000				

TABLE 8

SUPERINTENDENT DOMINANCE AND POLARITY
CONTROLLED FOR MEDIAN YEARS SERVICE

	Superintendent Dominance			
	High	Moderate	Low	Total
A. Median Years Service Low (Less than 6.0)				
Unipolar	37.5%	10.0%	33.3%	26.7%
Nonpolar	25.0	60.0	58.3	50.0
Bipolar	37.5	30.0	8.3	23.3
	100.0%	100.0%	99.9%	100.0%
N =	8	10	12	30
Gamma = -.247				
B. Median Years Service High (6.0 or more)				
Unipolar	45.5%	33.3%	14.3%	33.3%
Nonpolar	45.5	22.2	57.1	40.7
Bipolar	9.1	44.4	28.6	25.9
	100.1%	99.9%	100.0%	99.9%
N =	11	9	7	27
Gamma = .366				

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inconsistency here for moderately-dominated boards, which have a higher proportion of bipolar boards than do those classified as low-dominated. This indicates that the control variable has eliminated some, but not all, of the curvilinearity exhibited in the original relationship (see Table 2 and related discussion). For the non-insulated boards (top of Table 8), we observe that the relationship has become slightly negative, even though some of the original curvilinearity exists here as well. Thus, we may revise our original conclusion about the curvilinear relationship between superintendent-dominance and conflict. We are now in a position to assert that while there is a tendency toward high cohesion among both high-dominated and low-dominated boards, high-dominated boards are more likely to be cohesive when members have more years of experience while low-dominated boards would tend to be cohesive with less-experienced members. This reinforces the statement made earlier about more experienced members looking to the superintendent for decision-making cues. It also suggests that board members who cannot adjust to superintendent dominance will not seek re-election.

Finally, we consider the impact of *perceived demand* as a control variable. Its overall effect is summarized in Table 9. It may be observed from this table that controlling for *perceived demand* again amplified the relationship between superintendent opposition and conflict as the previous control variable did, and also had some impact in the predicted direction on two of the five "shared attitudes" variables not affected by the other insulation variables, both involving *issues*. In particular, the relationship between *agreement on teacher participation* and *conflict* was much stronger among boards which were insulated by a lower perception of external demands. The relationship involving state government was affected only slightly. All of the other relationships moved in the opposite direction to that predicted, but those movements were too slight to be assigned any meaning. Thus, we must conclude that while none of the control variables were very effective for the internal variable relationships, *perceived demand* seemed to be somewhat more important than the other two controls in that it enhanced two additional "shared attitudes" relationships, thus improving the explanatory power of the internal variables under consideration.

The data involving the relationship between *opposition to the superintendent* and *conflict* are impressive. The *perceived demand* control seems to operate most effectively here, in that the relationship as described by the measure of association is a perfect one (gamma = 1.00). Thus, the control for *perceived demand* reinforces our earlier assertions about the important impact of this internal variable.

The agreements on *teacher participation-conflict* data are quite significant. Here a relatively weak initial association (gamma = -.252) became markedly stronger (-.427) when the insulated boards were examined alone. Thus, controlling for perceived demand more clearly established the importance of another issue, *teacher participation*. It appears that school boards are more sensitive to public demands in this issue area than in the other areas considered. Moreover, the findings demonstrate that the issue of teachers' participation in decision-making can be an important indicator of group

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TABLE 9

INTERNAL VARIABLES AND POLARITY
CONTROLLED FOR PERCEIVED DEMAND
(gamma values)

Variable	Perceived Demand High (Non-Insulated)		Low (Insulated)	As Predicted
Supt. Dominance	-.164	(-.078)[a]	.101	No
Opposition to Supt.	.778	(.886)	1.000	Yes
Role Orientation	.134	(.123)	.053	No
Agreement-Fed. Govt.	-.572	(-.502)	-.400	No
Agreement-State Govt.	-.286	(-.302)	-.298	Yes
Agreement-Desegregation	.167	(.179)	.020	No
Agreement-Participation	.158	(-.252)	-.427	Yes

[a]Original relationships (uncontrolled gamma values) presented in parentheses.

cohesion or conflict, particularly among boards where demand levels are perceived to be relatively low.

Thus, we conclude the discussion of internal variables with the realization that while many of the hypotheses were not confirmed conclusively, there were some significant findings which seem to help explain varying degrees of group conflict and cohesion among Kentucky school boards. The analysis produced several internal variables which have considerable power to explain variations in conflict among these groups of decision-makers.

While *opposition to the superintendent* emerged as the single most important internal variable, confirming our expectations that school board decision-making seems to focus on the *personality* of the superintendent, the most prominent finding concerned the importance of *issues* to the aspect of decision-making under examination. Even though these findings were hypothesized, a political scientist is always surprised when he finds issues playing an important role in political behavior. After all, the conventional wisdom, based on several voting behavior studies, has been that there is a "widespread lack of familiarity with prominent issues of public policy" among most voters.[59] While this position has been challenged, the notion persists that issues are the least important factor in voting behavior, being much less compelling than party or candidate.

In order to understand the findings of the present study, then, we must regard school board members as elites to whom issues are important. McClosky, for example, found in comparing "influentials" (delegates to

[59]Angus Campbell, et al., *The American Voter* (New York: John Wiley, 1960), p. 188. See especially Chapters 8 and 9.

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national party conventions) to the electorate that the "influentials" tended to come from the more articulate segments of society and, on the average, to be politically more aware than their followers and far better informed about issues.[60] He found the elites to be more likely to have opinions on public questions, to be more partisan, more ideologically consistent in their views, and " . . . far better able than the electorate to select leaders whose political philosophy they share."[61] McClosky suggests that this is so because " . . . active political involvement heightens one's sense of intellectual order and commitment," and he characterized the elites as possessing "superior ideological sophistication."[62] Thus, applying this argument to our respondents, along with other findings presented earlier, suggests that educational decision-makers have important similarities to other political decision-makers at the state and federal levels.

CONCLUSIONS

This section contains a brief summation of some of the findings of the preceeding sections. The primary purpose is to examine and compare the differential impact upon school board conflict of external variables and internal variables. Before doing this, however, we here summarize some descriptive findings not presented above.

The individual responses of over 500 Kentucky school board members revealed some interesting information. This information was not related to the hypothesis-testing which constituted the major thrust of this project, and the findings were largely replicative of earlier studies. However, because they relate school board decision-making to the political process, several of the conclusions, including the following, could prove quite useful to political scientists:

1. Over one-fifth of the respondents (22.6%) acknowledged that they were directly recruited by the superintendent.
2. Nearly one-half (48.3%) of the respondents said that the superintendent and his policies were "usually" or "sometimes" election issues.
3. More than half of the superintendent-recruited members had, before election to their positions, been appointed by the board to complete an unexpired term of one who had resigned.
4. Over 85% of the respondents chose the "trustee" representational role orientation over the "delegate" alternative.
5. The superintendent plays the leading role in every decisional area about which board members were questioned. He is most dominant in the areas of the instructional program and the budget and least dominant in the areas of public relations and new buildings.

[60] Herbert McClosky, *et al.*, "Issue Conflict and Consensus Among Party Leaders and Followers," American Political Science Review, 54 (June, 1960), p. 420.

[61] Herbert McClosky, "Consensus and Ideology in American Politics," *American Political Science Review*, 53 (June, 1964), pp. 372-73.

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 372.

TABLE 10

EXTERNAL VS. INTERNAL VARIABLES
BIVARIATE RELATIONSHIPS

	Gamma Value	Significance Level
External Variables		
Social Status	-.306	.05
District Income	-.261	.08
District Competition	.244	.10
Internal Variables		
Opposition to Supt.	.886	.001
Agreement-Role of Fed. Government	-.502	.01
Agreement-Role of State Government	-.302	.08
Agreement-Teacher Militancy	-.252	.10

6. Board members who perceived substantial conflict on their boards found board service to be less enjoyable than those who reported less serious conflict.
7. Perceptions of intra-board conflict and school district conflict (resulting from board decisions) were significantly related.
8. Superintendent-recruited members reported less board conflict.
9. Board members reporting greater involvement of the superintendent in board campaigns were more likely to perceive substantial intra-board conflict.
10. Political Independents tended to report less conflict than Democrats or Republicans.

The hypothesis-testing resulted in relatively few statistically significant relationships. The external and internal variables introducing the most significant bivariate relationships (all achieving a probability level of .10 or less) are enumerated in Table 10, along with their gamma values and significance levels. The data in Table 10 would seem to indicate that internal variables are somewhat more important than external variables. Among the internal variables, *opposition to the superintendent* produced a strong relationship with the dependent variable, so strong that it seems possible that the two variables are measuring the same type of behavior, even though there are indications to the contrary, presented earlier. The other internal variables producing meaningful relationships are all related to issue agreement among board members. Obviously, the most prominent variable here is agreement on the issue of the federal government, with the issues of the role of state government and teacher participation also emerging as fairly important. We have discussed

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earlier the significance of issues for school board decision-making, particularly the issue involving the federal government.

Of the three constituency variables, we again observe that the only variable to achieve a significant relationship at a generally accepted level ($p<.05$) is the external variable labelled "social status," which encompases measures of both district income and education. The strenghts of the relationships involving income and competition indicate that they should not be ignored in future research, even though they fail to attain acceptable statistical significance. It should be pointed out that those three variables emerged as much more indicative of board conflict than other measures of district characteristics which we had expected would be powerful. These included measures of district heterogeneity—metropolitanism, *district size* and *percent Negro*—and also the simple measure of *district education*. The fact that district competition was apparently more powerful than some of the "non-political" variables was particularly surprising, in light of some of the recent research which downgrades the importance of such variables and also because the respondents themselves generally dismissed the saliency of electoral threat. In summary, then, the bivariate analysis suggested that group variables were slightly more important than constituency variables, that shared attitudes on issues were the most meaningful group variables, and that *social status* was the most significant external variable, even though *competition* could not be readily dismissed.

When bivariate relationships were controlled, the relative importance of the variables just discussed was clarified and modified to some extent. Table 11 presents the variables which produced the strongest relationships (in the predicted direction) when controls were introduced. That is, each of the external variables at the top of the table produced a stronger relationship when the control variable isolated the boards which were "non-insulated" because of high levels of demand and a relatively short length of service for board members. Each of the internal variables at the bottom of the table became more powerful under conditions of "insulation"—low levels of demand and competition and a relatively longer period of board member tenure. All variables have been included which produced a relatively strong measure of association (gamma values greater than .30). From these data, two different factors may be observed. We are able to determine which of each set of variables emerge as most powerful under the most favorable conditions, as far as controls are concerned. Also, we may make some assessment of which controls have the most utility.

Generally, we again find the relationships for internal variables to be of a greater magnitude than those for external variables. However, the reason for much of this involves the extremely high correlation values for the internal variable, "opposition to the superintendent," to which we have tended because of the rather obvious nature of the relationship, to give less consideration. Besides this, we observe that the controls have little impact on the internal variables, as only one additional variable, "superintendent dominance," is added to the original group of important variables presented in Table 10. On the other hand, two additional variables, *metropolitanism* and

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district education emerge as relatively powerful among the external variables when controls are introduced and the significance of the originally important variables is reinforced. Thus, we may conclude that while internal, group variables remain most compelling in explaining school board conflict, a series of external variables adds a good deal of explanatory import to this study of group conflict and cohesion, particularly when the group is exposed to constituency pressures and demands. The data at the top of Table 11 reveal that social status characteristics, heterogeneity characteristics, and competition all contribute (either positively or negatively) to group conflict. The information in Table 11 also indicates that both *perceived demand* and *length of service* have had some utility in this analysis, especially for external variables, but that *perceived competition* is quite ineffective except in the one issue area (role of federal government) discussed previously.

The findings are recapitulated in schematic form in figures 1 and 2. However, for this presentation, we have separated the variables contributing to *cohesion* (Figure 1) from those which contribute to *intra-group conflict* (Figure 2). In Figure 1, we may observe in a different format the relative importance of each of the variables which contribute significantly to school board cohesion (lack of conflict), both with and without controls (the unbroken lines representing bivariate relationships; broken lines showing introduction of controls). Among the district characteristics, it is readily apparent that *social status* is most important, as it achieves a significant bivariate relationship with *cohesion* which is strengthened for both controls (*perceived demand* and *tenure*). We also observe that *district education* is an important contributor to *cohesion* only when *perceived demands* expose boards to the external environment. Among the group variables, each of the issue variables involving shared attitudes contributes meaningfully to *cohesion* even before controls are introduced to insulate the group. For conditions of insulation, we observe a strengthening of both the federal government variable (when *perceived competition* is low) and the teacher militancy variable (when controlled for *perceived demands*). Finally, we note that *superintendent dominance* contributes to *cohesion* only when *long tenure* insulates the boards from the external environment.

In Figure 2 we discover that only three of the variables being considered are meaningfully related to school board conflict: *district competition* and *metropolitanism of the districts* characteristics and *opposition to the superintendent*, the only internal variable. Obviously, the latter variable is predominant whether considered by itself or controlled for insulation. On the other hand, the two external variables do not really contribute meaningfully to *conflict* until controls are introduced which expose the group to the external environment. Thus, these two rudimentary models form a groundwork upon which to build additional generalizations about school board decision-making.

What is the main significance of these findings, both to educators and political scientists? In a general sense, it would seem that both groups should be aware of the fact that educational decision-making is an area where processes occur which are essentially political and may be subjected to fruitful anaylsis focusing on political variables. In this study, we discovered

FIGURE 1

A MODEL OF SCHOOL BOARD COHESION

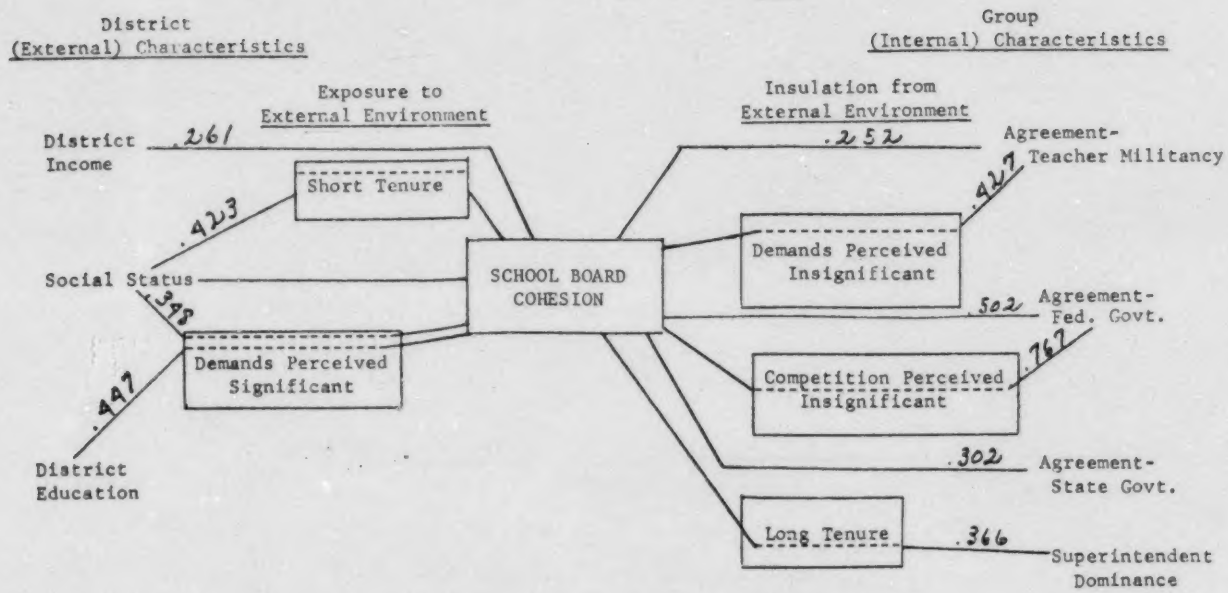

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FIGURE 2

A MODEL OF SCHOOL BOARD CONFLICT

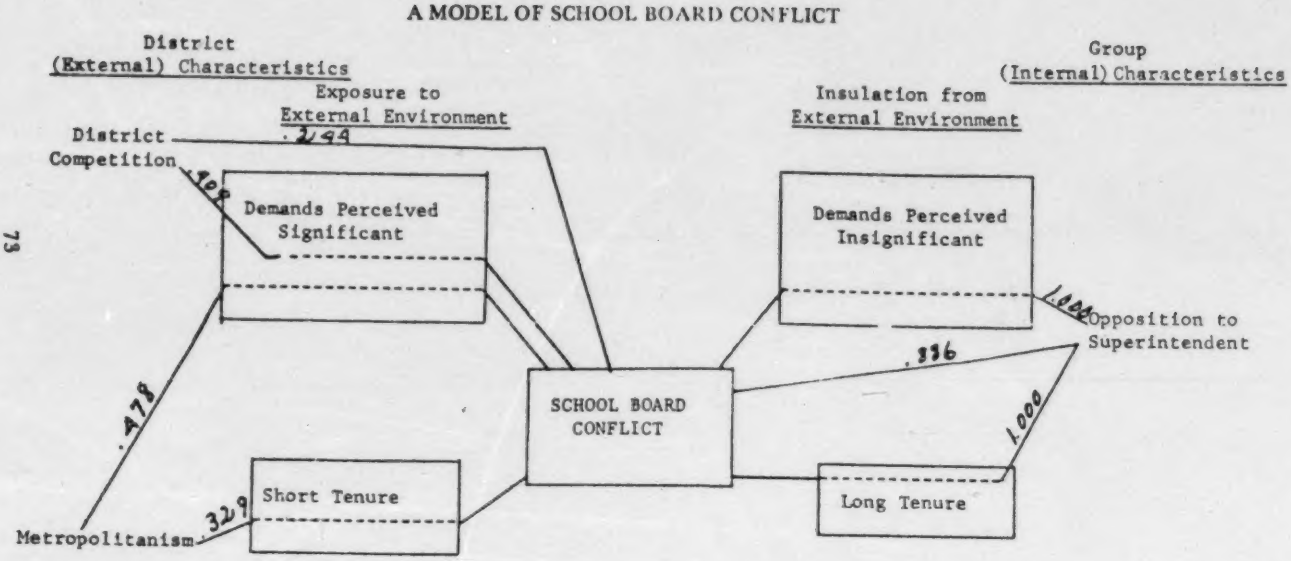

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TABLE 11

EXTERNAL VS. INTERNAL VARIABLES
CONTROLLED FOR INSULATION

Variable	Gamma Value	Significance Level	Control
External Variables (Non-Insulated)			
Metropolitanism	.478	.08	Perceived Demand
District Education	-.447	.05	Length of Service
Social Status	-.423	.06	Length of Service
District Competition	.409	.06	Perceived Demand
Social Status	-.348	.09	Perceived Demand
Metropolitanism	.329	.10	Length of Service
Internal Variables (Insulated)			
Opposition to Supt.	1.000	.001	Perceived Demand
Opposition to Supt.	1.000	.001	Length of Service
Agreement-Fed. Govt.	-.767	.01	Perceived Competition
Agreement-Teacher Militancy	-.427	.07	Perceived Demand
Supt. Dominance	-.366	.09	Length of Service

the existence of conflict, one of the chief components of politics, among groups of decision-makers where some have argued that no conflict should or does exist. Further, we found this conflict linked in a meaningful way to constituency factors, establishing that school board members do not make their decisions based on internal factors alone but seem to be aware of some responsibilities as representatives of their constituents. Political scientists should be interested to know that, in several ways, board members behave like political decision-makers in other areas, particularly legislators at the state and local levels.[63] This assertion is supported most effectively by the findings on the importance of perceived demand as a control variable. It is obvious that perception of school district demands, unlike perceptions of competition, do have an impact on school board decision-making. While school board members for the most part resist being characterized as "instructed delegates," the findings of this study revealed that the level of demands helps to structure and clarify the correlates of group cohesion. This suggests simply that school board members are political animals who do respond to constituent demands even though they profess (and the data generally support them) to be relatively unconcerned about electoral sanctions. The other finding of particular interest to political scientists is the

[63] See especially M. Kent Jennings and Harmon Zeigler, "Response Styles and Politics: The Case of School Boards," *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, 15 (May, 1971), pp. 290-321.

importance of issues to the decision-making process on Kentucky school boards.

Educators would probably be most interested in the findings involving the importance of the superintendent in the decision-making process, although this conclusion would certainly come as no surprise to most of them. They may be somewhat surprised to learn of the extent of opposition to superintendents among this group of school boards and the impact it has. It seems to the writer that educators should find the entire concept of "insulation" rather significant, particularly the finding that board members evidently become less responsive to their constituents and more responsive to the superintendent as their tenure in office increases.

Finally, the writer recognizes the need for further research on this topic. The most obvious omission from this study is the output dimension. What difference does school board conflict (or other decisional characteristics) make in the kinds of policies made by school boards? We would hope to explore this question in the future using data from the present study, but the greatest limitation on this type of research is determining what policies to examine and how to measure them.[64] Another topic worthy of further explanation would be the whole area of school board member campaigning, recruitment, and political socialization. Our research has merely scratched the surface of this very important and fascinating subject.[65] Finally, we need to pay more attention in future research to the role of the superintendent in school board decision-making. Another study of this kind would have to consider the superintendent's perspective, and his responses to the questions asked board members would have to be included in the analysis. We know, for example, that the superintendent is a dominant figure in the decision-making process, but we have not explored adequately the sources of his power. In Kentucky, observers have indicated that patronage is among the most important of his resources, but we need to know more specifically how he uses patronage, what patronage is available, and what alternative sources of power he has available.

Thus, this study has contributed to the literature of collegial decision-making generally, and particularly to the research on political decision-making in education, by exploring some of the sources and correlates of school board conflict in Kentucky. It is anticipated that these findings, by presenting additional evidence attesting to the centrality of politics in educational decision-making, might provide fresh motivation to political scientists to continue the study of school board politics and the politics of education.

[64] For some suggestions for beginnings see Samuel K. Gove, "Educational Policy," *Policy Studies Journal*, 1 (August, 1972), pp. 41-44.

[65] Journalists' observations of school board races in the November, 1972 elections in Kentucky suggest that motivations for running are more complex and sophisticated than ever before but that pro-superintendent and anti-superintendent slates continue to be put forward. See *Louisville Courier-Journal*, particularly October 26, 1972, and November 8, 1972.

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About the Authors

Roland Charles Haun, a native of Knoxville, Tennessee, received the Bachelor of Science degree in philosophy from the University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, in 1960 and the Master of Arts degree from Georgetown College, Georgetown, Kentucky, in 1969. He has served as teacher, coach, and principal in the public schools of Kentucky. In 1971 he entered the doctoral program with the Division of Administration and Supervision, and was awarded the degree of Doctor of Education in spring 1973. At present Dr. Haun is principal of the Carroll County High School in Carrollton, Ky.

Paul D. Blanchard, a native of Flint, Michigan, is presently assistant professor of political science at Eastern Kentucky University, where he has taught since 1970. His doctorate is from the University of Kentucky and he also has degrees from Southern Illinois University and the University of Michigan. Most of Professor Blanchard's research has been in the area of politics and education; recent articles have appeared in *School and Community* and the *Midwest Review of Public Administration*. He has also served as a consultant to the Fayette County (Kentucky) Schools and the Kentucky Law Enforcement Council.